

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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NICK CARTER IN THE CHINESE JOINT

OR A BARGAIN IN CRIME.



By THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

"BACK!" CRIED PATSY, STILL IN THE VOICE OF THE GIRL LUCY.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

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NICK CARTER IN CHINATOWN; OR, THE DOYERS STREET CRIMINALS.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I. DECLARING WAR.

"Patsy!"

"Yes, sir."

"I've got a job for you."

"Bully! I'm glad of it, Mr. Carter."

"It is no walk-over, Pat. Your life will be in constant danger from beginning to end, and you will have the hardest part to play that you have ever undertaken."

"I'm ready, sir."

The first speaker was the famous detective, Nick Carter, and the second was his faithful servant and second assistant, Patsy.

"Patsy, do you know anything about Chinatown?"

"Do you mean Pell and Doyers streets?"

"Yes."

"I've been there."

"I have never given you any real, downright detective work to do."

"No, sir."

"I'm going to try you."

"Thank you, sir."

"I'm going to fix you up as an attractive young girl of about sixteen, and send you to Doyers street."

"That'll be great!"

"And dangerous, Patsy."

"Bah! I don't care for the danger."

"You will see some."

"All the better."

"We will begin at once."

"I'm ready."

"I have everything mapped out for you up to a certain point."

"Yes, sir."

"After that you will have to rely upon your own resources."

"Very good."

"I won't be far off any of the time, but you won't know when I'm near, for you will think me a Chinaman."

"What am I to do?"

"I'll tell you in good time. Come into the study, now."

Patsy followed his master into that mysterious room, where so many transformations had been wrought, and where all the paraphernalia of the detective's numerous disguises were kept.

Nick Carter went about the intended occupation at once.

Patsy began by entirely disrobing, for he was to wear only one disguise, and that was to be a thorough one.

His costume was feminine, and it was perfect to the most minute detail.

The wig with which his head was adorned, was of a beautiful golden blonde, wavy and as natural as though it really grew upon him.

Before adjusting it, the youth's head was shaven so clean that not a suspicion of hair remained, and then, with a preparation of glue which the detective sometimes used, the wig was fastened firmly to the bald pate.

"There," said Nick, when it was done, "if anybody attempts to drag you up or down stairs by the hair of your head, the wig won't come off unless your head comes with it."

Patsy made a wry face.

"Is it on for life?" he asked.

"No," laughed Nick; "not quite. I can remove it easily enough when the time comes."

"Nice looking chap I'd be without it; wouldn't I?"

"You're not a chap—you're a girl."

"Oh!"

"You must forget that you ever were a boy."

"Cert."

"What name would you prefer, my child?" asked Nick, smilingly.

"What's the matter with Lucy?"

"She's all right."

"Then I'll be Lucy—h'm! Lucy Baxter."

"Very good; Lucy Baxter it is. What a fortunate thing it is, my boy——"

"I'm not a boy!"

"Correct. What a fortunate thing it is that your beard has not begun to grow. When I was your age, I had nearly as much as I have now."

"All I've got is a little fuzz on my upper lip."

"Yes; and so little that I think I'll leave it. It rather adds to your style of beauty."

"Thanks," dryly.

"Now for your ears, Miss Lucy."

"My ears?"

"Yes."

"Don't girls have ears?"

"Yes, but they are like old coins."

"How so?"

"Because they have holes in them."

"Oh!"

"I'll just pierce them, and introduce the ear-rings at once. Then I'll put a little healing ointment on them, and they will be all right in a few hours."

"Go ahead."

"You must not remove the ear-drops, Miss Lucy; you might not get them in again."

"Sleep in 'em?"

"Certainly."

"Say, won't the blamed things grow beautiful girl. fast?"

"I have never heard that ear-drops grew, Lucy, either fast or slow."

"Pshaw! I mean——"

"I can take them out and so can you, when you have no further use for them."

"All right; anything more? A lot of paint next, I suppose."

"Paint! Not a bit of it! No, your face is all right without any make-up at all, and you really make a very pretty girl."

"Do I?"

"Yes, you do."

"That's comforting."

"I wouldn't have believed it, Patsy——"

"Lucy, please."

"——if I hadn't tried."

"Neither would I. Well, what next?"

"Your instructions come next, for I think I have finished with the costume. I wish Chick were here; I'd like to have him see you. By Jove! I don't believe he'd know you. Look in the glass."

Patsy crossed the room and paused in front of the large mirror.

He actually blushed as he gazed at his reflection, for in no sense whatever did it resemble genial Patsy.

Rather tall for a young lady of sixteen, the height gave him, in the costume he wore, an added charm and interest. Slender and graceful—for Patsy is as agile as a cat—beautiful blue eyes, with arched brows several shades darker than the wavy golden hair; teeth as white as pearls, and perfectly even; with the bloom of health upon his cheeks and glowing in ruby-redness upon his lids, Patsy might have passed anywhere, in any parlor, among men or women, as a

The disguise was perfect in every detail. Not a point, no matter how trivial, had been omitted when Nick Carter created the pseudo Lucy Baxter.

Presently he turned and faced the detective again.

"I guess there's no danger that anybody will tumble," he said. "If I had been walking toward a large mirror like that in the corridor of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, I'd have been stuck on the girl coming my way, sure."

"No doubt."

"Now, what's up?"

"We're going to root out some of the evil in Doyers street. Hark! There is the door-bell."

Patsy started involuntarily to answer the summons, but the detective detained him.

"Let Mrs. Carter's maid answer the bell while Patsy is away," he said.

A moment later the maid announced Mr. Terry, the president of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

"Come," said Nick to Patsy.

They entered the reception-room together, where Mr. Terry was awaiting them.

"You are promptly on time, commodore," said the detective.

"Yes. Have you found some one to help you in the work?"

"I have; this young lady. Miss Baxter, this is Mr. Terry."

Mr. Terry pulled his whiskers thoughtfully after acknowledging the introduction.

"I don't think I quite understand what you intend to do, Carter," he said, presently.

"I intend to root out those dens of horror and infamy in Doyers street."

"Yes; certainly; of course; that is the business we have in hand; but—er—this—er—young lady, you know——"

"Miss Lucy Baxter."

"H'm! Yes. Miss Baxter, how old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"Just beyond your control, you see, Mr. Terry," said Nick.

"Yes; but I would withdraw from the whole case, Carter, sooner than place a child with that pure face and those innocent eyes in jeopardy."

Nick's eyes twinkled.

"That pure face has been pounded with horny fists before now," he said, slowly, "and those innocent eyes have looked upon crime in all its most revolting forms."

CHAPTER II.

THE BOWERY BY NIGHT.

Commodore Terry was for a moment too greatly astonished to speak.

Nick's utterance had been deliberate, and the detective was not given to making rash statements.

"Is there not some mistake here?" asked Mr. Terry, presently.

"None."

"And is this child a reclaimed unfortunate?"

"Literally that. I took her from the streets two years ago, or more."

"But——"

"She has seen all there is to be seen of vice and crime, Mr. Terry. She knows where to look for it, how to avoid it, how to betray it to us—and there is no danger of her backsliding."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely."

"It seems incredible."

"What! That she should not drift again into the old life?"

"No; but that she should have seen it all."

Then the good president turned to Patsy, who during the conversation of which he was the subject, had sat demurely by with downcast eyes and blushing cheeks.

"Lucy," he said, "can it be possible that all the detective tells me is true?"

"Quite so, sir."

"Has Mr. Carter told you what is expected of you?"

"In part—yes, sir."

"And you are willing——"

"Eager, sir."

Again the president was silent for a moment.

Presently he looked up into the detective's face, and said slowly:

"Some other means must be found, Carter. I can't consent to sending this girl into that polluted atmosphere."

Nick threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I think the disguise will do, Patsy," he said.

"You bet!" was the hearty response, in Patsy's genuine tones.

Mr. Terry looked bewildered.

"My dear sir," said the detective, "Lucy Baxter is not Lucy Baxter at all; she is not even a girl, but my second assistant, Patsy, whom I have rigged up for the occasion."

It took some time to convince Mr. Terry, but when he thoroughly understood matters, he was delighted with the scheme.

Two hours were spent in discussing plans for the campaign, and evening was just falling when the detective and Patsy were again alone.

"Now skip, Pat," said Nick. "You know the ropes—where you are to go and what you are to do. This is as good a time as any to begin, so lose no time."

Ten minutes later, Patsy left the house, but nobody would have suspected that he was not what he appeared—a beautiful young girl.

He boarded a south-bound Third avenue surface car, but at Grand street, on the Bowery, he left it and walked slowly down that celebrated thoroughfare, stopping often to gaze into lighted windows, and frequently asking the way to some remote locality of the city of the passers-by.

At that hour, eight-thirty in the evening, the Bowery teems with life.

There one may meet with every phase of character known to the great city of New York, and in no place in the world could an innocent girl be in more danger, particularly if she shows signs of being a stranger in the locality and of having lost her way.

Patsy knew that he would be accosted before he had gone far, and he was not mistaken.

He was just passing the Thalia Theatre when a dapper young man, dressed in the extreme of the latest fashion, stepped suddenly in front of him.

"Why, good-evening, dear," he exclaimed to the supposed young lady; "who would have thought of meeting you here?"

The pretended Lucy drew herself up proudly, and, assuming a half-fright-

ened look, cried:

"I don't know you, sir."

"Oh, don't you? Well, that makes no difference. Come, take my arm and we'll talk as we move along."

"No, sir. I will not take your arm," and the supposed girl drew back quickly.

"Look here, Fanny——"

"My name isn't Fanny; it's Lucy."

"Lucy, eh? That's awfully pretty. Say, you've lost your way, haven't you?"

"Yes," and tears stood in Lucy's eyes.

"I thought so. It's lucky I found you, or you'd have been sure to get into trouble."

"Trouble! how?"

"Oh, there are lots of chances along here at night. Where do you live, Lucy?"

"In Willimantic."

"Oh! In Willimantic, eh? Why, I used to lie there myself. I was born there, Lucy."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, certainly. I know lots of people there now. The Fullers, the Potters, the Cruikshanks, and——"

"Oh! I'm so glad I met you."

"So am I, just! Come along, Lucy, we're old friends now, aren't we? We'll have some ice-cream and——"

A harsh voice interrupted his further speech.

"Move on there, Harry, and leave the girl alone, or I'll haul you in," it said; and the huge form of a ponderous, blue-coated policeman stepped between them.

The man who was addressed as Harry did not attempt to offer any explanation.

He faded away in the crowd of pedestrians as suddenly as he had appeared, and was gone.

"Why!" said the pretended Lucy; "what did he run away for, Mr Officer?"

"'Cos I'd ha' made it warm for him if he hadn't."

"Why?"

"He was givin' you a steer."

"A what?"

"Leadin' you off."

"Why! he came from Willimantic, where I live. He knew lots of——"

"Bosh!"

"Sir?"

"He lied. That was Handsome Harry, the sharpest confidence man in New York."

"Confidence man! What is that? A man in whom one can place confidence? Well, he did look honest, and he was——"

"Well, you are green. Tell me where you are staying and I will send you there."

"Thank you. My aunt is waiting for me just below here, so I won't trouble you."

"Do you know how to find her?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, then. Don't talk with any more strangers, though."

The counterfeit Lucy passed on, leaving the policeman in doubt as to whether he was right in allowing her to continue her way alone; but his attention was soon called away, and he forgot the incident entirely.

There was another person who had witnessed all that took place, and who, at a safe distance, followed after Lucy (as we will continue to designate Patsy) after she parted from the officer.

That person was a woman.

She was handsomely and tastefully

dressed, and her face had once been very beautiful.

Now, however, her hair was liberally streaked with gray, her features were pinched and drawn, and her complexion was wax-like and pale almost to whiteness with, however, a tinge of yellow perceptible through the cuticle.

There were traces of former refinement lingering about her which could not fail to impress the beholder, but in her eyes there was a greedy, hungry look, which to an expert at once told the awful tale of days and nights spent within the reeking atmosphere of opium dens, stupefied by the insidious and deadly drug.

An opium fiend who had first neglected and then abandoned her home, drawn by the hideous vampire which saps the honor as well as the life-blood of its victim, she had gone on down the steep, until that deepest slough of baseness was reached, where she acted the part of a procuress for the sake of getting the means of furnishing herself with the drug.

Her greedy eyes had fallen upon the supposed country girl when Handsome Harry first accosted her; she had seen the policeman interfere, and had watched Harry's flight, and all the while she hovered in the background, awaiting the opportunity which she knew would soon come, when she could, unobserved, address the supposed innocent, and by enticing phrases, glittering promises, adroit flattery, and address, start her down the road of infamy to certain destruction.

But the eyes of the young assistant detective had also fallen upon her.

Patsy recognized in her a woman who was known as Bess Burdette, and one who

had always been shrewd enough to keep out of the clutches of the police.

"Bess is just the huckleberry I want," he muttered, as he left the policeman's side, "and unless I am very greatly mistaken, she has marked me for her prey."

CHAPTER III.

A BARGAIN IN CRIME.

Ere the pretended young lady, Lucy Baxter, had gone a block farther, Bess Burdette accosted her.

"Good-evening, Lucy," she said.

"The disguised boy paused instantly, and looked wonderingly at the woman who had spoken.

"How do you know my name?" inquired the bogus Lucy, artlessly.

"Why, I knew you when you were a little child—a baby, in fact, my dear. Don't you remember me?"

"No."

"You used to call me Aunt Bessie when you were about four years old."

"I don't remember you at all."

"Of course not, Lucy; you were so young then. Is your papa well, and mamma also?"

Lucy frowned.

"That's why I left home," she said.

"Ah!" was the non-committal reply.

"Yes; I lost my mamma, and papa brought a new one to our home. I ran away, and——"

"I know the rest, dear," said the woman, highly elated.

Things could not be better.

Here was a girl who had run away from home, for whom, in all probability, very little if any search would be made. She would prove an easy prey and a remunerative one.

"You have left Willimantic for good, then?" she continued.

"Yes."

"When did you reach New York?"

"This afternoon."

"And where are you staying?"

"I don't know yet where I will stay. I will go to a hotel, I think. I have a little money."

They were now walking side by side in the direction of Chatham Square.

Bess Burdette's eyes were glistening with avarice.

She felt that she had, indeed, found a prize.

"How very fortunate that I met you, Lucy," she said, with all the cordiality and tenderness she could find in her voice.

"Why?"

"Because I can take you directly home with me."

"But——"

"There! Say no more about it. I will give you a home until you find work to do."

"Oh, thank you."

"Don't thank me, child. It affords me the greatest pleasure, I assure you."

"You are very kind."

"Did you bring any baggage with you?"

"Only a satchel. I left it at the depot."

"Ah, yes. We will attend to that tomorrow. Now come with me."

"Where do you live, Aunt Bessie?"

"Oh, very near. We will turn here."

She led the way into Doyers street, the supposed unsuspecting victim following obediently by her side.

"Isn't this a very dark and narrow

street?" ventured Lucy, in a timid voice, presently.

"Yes, but I am poor, my dear; I have to live here because the rent is cheap."

"Then I ought not to impose upon you."

"Here we are," cried Bess, paying no attention to the last remark, and pausing before a door of one of the dingy, dirty, repulsive looking houses with which Doyers street abounds.

"What, here? Do you live here?" inquired Lucy.

"Yes; that is, I board here. It is a boarding-house kept by a Chinaman."

"A Chinaman! Oh, how nice! I have often read about their almond eyes and the funny way they talk."

Then, in a whisper, she added, eagerly:

"Is he nice?"

"Nice!" exclaimed the procuress, surprised for an instant out of her complaisance; "who?"

"The Chinaman."

"Oh! He's a perfect angel, Lucy."

"Really? What is his name?"

"Hop Ah Long."

"Hopalong! How funny."

Further remark was interrupted by the appearance of the Mongolian at the door in answer to Bess Burdette's summons.

"What wantee now?" he demanded.

"Good-evening, Mr. Ah Long," said Bess, as though she had not parted with the same Chinaman less than half an hour before. "I have brought a young lady friend with me to spend the night."

"Allee light. Walkee in, Melican young lady, purty gal."

Bess stepped back until she believed her victim could not see her.

Then she made a few rapid signs to the Chinaman which he seemed to understand perfectly.

A moment later they passed through the doorway, and mounted a flight of rickety stairs, passed along a dimly lighted hallway, and paused before a door at the rear.

"Here is my room, Lucy," said Bess. "You will be very comfortable here for the short time you remain."

"Thank you. I shall never forget your kindness."

For an instant a spark of womanhood, lying deep and almost forgotten in the woman's heart, was fanned into life.

She turned suddenly toward her supposed victim as if about to relent.

But through the open door at that instant came the scent of opium smoke.

It filled her nostrils and hardened her heart.

"Come!" she said, somewhat harshly.

"Remove your bonnet and make yourself comfortable. We will have some tea presently."

There was a dim light in the room, and the supposed girl walked wearily toward a couch, and having thrown aside her bonnet sank upon the cushions.

"I am very tired," she said.

"Of course, poor child."

Bess was about to say more when there came a tap at the door.

It was pushed open a little way, and the yellow face of Hop Ah Long peered in at them.

"Melican gallee allee light?" he said.

"Yes," replied Bess, crossly.

"Melican gallee purty, allee same like flowel; sabe?" he continued, leering

through the aperture at the supposed Lucy.

But Bess Burdette believed that she had found a prize, and she was determined to make the most of it.

She turned toward the door, pushed the Chinaman into the hall, followed him out, and closed the door behind her.

In an instant the supposed Lucy was upon her feet, all trace of fatigue being gone.

One quick bound took her to the door, and in a second her ear was pressed against the keyhole, listening to all that was being said without.

"Can't you wait a minute, Hop?" Patsy heard Bess demand, wrathfully.

"Melican gal gleet beauty," was the calm reply.

"Yes, and a great catch, too."

"Belly purty gallee."

"She's as innocent as a dove, as pretty as a picture, and she can never be traced."

"Cops no tlacée gallee. Hop Ah Long likee dat. What more Bessie say, hey?"

"You've got to come down handsomely for her, Hop."

"Ye'; twen'-fli' dol'."

"Twenty-five dollars!"

"Ye'."

"A hundred; no less."

"Bessie tamfoollee, think China pay allee that. China pay fifty."

"Then I'll take the girl away."

"No do that, Besse."

"Why not?"

"Me no lettee her go; sabe? Me keep-ee her here, allee samee like padlock; sabe? No gittee way till Hop Ah Long say go; sabe that?"

"I'd like to see you stop me if I choose to take her away."

"Me stoppee you allee samee."

"How?"

"Wif this."

"Bah! Do you think I'm afraid of you knife? Look at this! Before you could reach me with that toothpick of yours I'd shoot you full of holes, you yellow——"

"China stoppee pipe. Bessie do as him say, or Bessie no get drug; sabe that?"

"Pooh! Look here, Hop, don't you suppose I can get a hundred dollars for that girl somewhere else? I won't talk with you any more. I'll take her to Sam Sing. He——"

"Bessie tamfoollee."

"You said that before."

"Me give you sleventy-fli' dol' an' smokee for month. Bess do dat?"

"Yes; fork over."

"When I gettee gallee."

"Well, I'll trust you, Hop; you never went back on me yet."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE OPIUM DEN.

Thus was the bargain concluded by which the supposed Lucy was sold as so much merchandise.

When Bess Burdette re-entered the room Lucy was still lying upon the couch; her eyes were closed, and she seemed to be sleeping.

For several moments the woman looked down upon her, silent and motionless.

Then she unknowingly began to murmur her thoughts half aloud.

"Why not?" she muttered. "I could do it easily. I could take her down the stairs silently, put her out of the front

door, and tell her to run, run, and she would be safe then.

"But would she? No, no! Ere she had gone a block she would fall into other hands worse than mine; somebody else would get the profit, and I—I would be deprived of my precious drug, and then I should go mad—mad.

"Bah! I am getting soft-hearted. What matters one crime more or less when I have to answer for so many?"

"I will make some tea, give her some food, and then she shall try the pipe; ah, the delicious pipe! Then unconsciousness, and then when she awakes she will not care to leave here."

Bess made tea and brought forth a lunch.

Then she awakened Lucy, and they supped together.

"Now," said Bess, when the things were cleared away, "I will give you the nicest time you ever had, Lucy."

"How?"

"Did you ever hear of smoking opium?"

Lucy tried to blush.

"I have smoked cigarettes," she said, demurely.

"Did you like them?"

"Not at first; they made me ill."

"But now——"

"I think they are delicious."

"Good! But they are nothing beside the opium I will give you. I will call Hop——"

"Who?"

"The Chinaman."

"Oh, Hopalong; well?"

"He will come here. Then we will lock the door so nobody can disturb us——"

"But he will be here."

"Oh, you mustn't mind him; he's all right."

"Well? and then——"

"He will prepare the opium for us, and we will smoke."

"What! All three?"

"Why, yes."

"Won't it make me sick?"

"Sick! No. I tell you it is delicious. You will become drowsy; presently you will fall asleep, and then you will have the most exquisite dreams. Oh, it is grand!"

She did not mention the horrible headache, the sickening nausea, the utter depression and despair which would come with the awakening.

Lucy, on her part, pretended to be eager to try the experiment, and presently Bess called the waiting Chinaman, who soon entered with the paraphernalia of opium smoking, and began the preparations for the debauch.

Bess looked on with eager eyes.

There was a bed in one corner of the room, and she threw herself upon it, calling to Lucy to follow her.

But Lucy declined.

She was satisfied with the couch upon which she had taken the pretended nap, and accordingly it was drawn up beside the bed for her.

During the preparations the Chinaman was singularly silent.

He rarely spoke, but his gloating eyes dwelt almost constantly upon the fair face of the supposed girl who had been so adroitly led into the Doyers street den to meet a fate that was worse than death.

Presently everything was in readiness. The peculiar looking pipe, ready for

use, was passed to Bess, who took a few whiffs upon it, rolled her eyes in ecstasy, then reluctantly relinquished it to Hop Ah Long, who passed it to Lucy. As he placed the instrument in her hands his eyes were fixed upon her with that same hungry glare with which he constantly regarded her.

"Don't look at me like that!" she said, pretending to be half frightened. "I will not smoke if you do."

"Wantee Hop lookee othel way?"

"Yes."

He turned his eyes from her for a moment, and when he looked back again she had closed hers, and was extending the pipe for him to take.

"Likee dat?" he demanded, softly.

"No."

"Tastee bettel bimeby. Tly ag'in pretty soon maybe, hey?"

"Yes."

"Makee head swim lilly bit?"

"Yes."

"Pretty soon headee no swim; eyes shuttee up;; Melican gallee go sleep; see angels; have fine timee, allee samee like heaben; sabe?"

"Yes."

"Pass the pipe!" demanded Bess.

Hop Ah Long took a whiff or two from the same stem, and then passed the pipe to the woman.

She kept it for a long time, smoking rapidly, and consequently falling quickly a victim to its insidious influence.

Her eyes grew stony, and she looked without seeing.

Frequently the Chinaman took the pipe from her, and passed it to Lucy, but the latter always refused to smoke while

the fierce eyes of the Mongolian were fixed upon other.

In reality she had not smoked at all.

Patsy knew that the time would soon come when he, as Lucy, would be supposed to be sufficiently under the influence of the drug not to care whether Hop Ah Long was looking or not.

When that time came he knew he could take a few whiffs while pretending to be overcome, and then, by suddenly allowing the pipe to fall to convince the Chinaman that the opium had done its work.

Lucy watched, however, to see that Bess should really succumb first.

Hop Ah Long was careful to smoke but little.

Bess, on the contrary, retained the pipe as long as she could each time. Lucy did not seem to be rapidly affected.

"Evel smokee this before?" demanded Hop once, when he passed the pipe to Lucy.

"No."

"Makee good smoker, Melican gallee. No have muchee effect."

"Don't talk to me."

The Chinaman smiled placidly.

That was the first symptom, and he recognized it.

Presently, when the pipe was passed to Bess, she did not take it.

The drug had done its work, and she was satisfied.

Then Hop took the pipe, and passed it to Lucy.

"Smokee hard now," he said; "allee samee like blazee."

Patsy seized the instrument, and took several sharp whiffs from the stem.

Then he allowed his head to fall back.

The pipe dropped from his fingers and rattled to the floor, and the supposed Lucy seemed to be sleeping.

Softly Hop Ah Long rose from the bed where he had been sitting.

There was a smile of triumph upon his face as he gently moved the couch back to its former position against the wall.

"Melican gallee belly beautiful," he murmured. "Hop Ah Long kiss her."

He bent forward to pollute the fair cheeks with the touch of his coarse lips, but the greatest surprise he had ever encountered in his life awaited him.

The drug had not overcome the fair Lucy after all.

As the Chinaman leaned forward Lucy Baxter's right arm was raised.

Her right hand shot out, and the Chinaman's nose was caught between a muscular thumb and finger in a grip that would have done credit to a full grown lobster.

It did not let go, either.

The supposed stupefied girl leaped to her feet, still clinging to the Chinaman's nose.

Patsy exerted every bit of muscular power he had, and the Mongolian fiend was dragged round and round the room, howling with pain and shrieking with rage.

CHAPTER V.

A FIGHT IN THE JOINT.

Yell after yell escaped the Chinaman as, unable to break the hold which Patsy had upon his nose, he was dragged hither and thither about the room.

Nor was the other hand of the young assistant detective idle during the time.

With his open hand he rained blow after blow upon Hop Ah Long's face, and they fell with resounding slaps like the noise of hearty applause from a theatre gallery.

"Ki-ki!" yelled the Monoglian. "China nose bustee! Ki! lettee go! China smashee Melican gal! Helpee! Whoosh! Ki! Holy smokee! Waouw!"

Suddenly Patsy saw the fellow thrust one hand beneath his shirt-like blouse, and the boy knew that he was in search of a knife.

He gave the devoted nose an extra tweak and twist at the same time, eliciting another howl of rage that startled the whole house.

At the same instant he released his hold, and as the Chinaman pitched partly forward Patsy drew back his right arm.

Then it shot forward with all the lad's strength, and his closed fist fell with crushing force squarely upon the end of that much abused proboscis.

Patsy had been for two years under the training of Nick Carter, and he had developed muscle and science remarkable in one so slightly built.

When the blow fell the Chinaman was raised from his feet, and he tumbled backward, alighting upon his head and shoulders in the middle of the floor, dazed and uncertain where he was.

For a full minute he was half stunned.

During that time the brave young assistant drew a revolver, and stood ready for whatever might happen.

He knew that the poise of the struggle had been heard in other parts of the house, and that in a few moments there would doubtless be a throng of Celestials rushing to the rescue.

He fully realized the danger he was in, but he knew also that the disguise he wore would save him from serious bodily harm, so long as the assailants did not suspect that he was not what he appeared to be.

As Hop Ah Long fell beneath the blow so forcibly delivered there was a noise of hurrying feet on the stairs.

Voices, chattering unintelligibly, came nearer and nearer, and at last paused in the hallway just outside of the door.

They were undecided what to do, evidently, but Hop Ah Long speedily informed them. He struggled to his feet, half dazed, but uttering a volley of curses and threats in which Chinese and pigeon English were strangely commingled.

His first thought was to make a rush for the girl who had handled him so roughly.

But at the second step he halted.

That wonderful girl was standing in one corner of the room, a revolver in her hand, and its muzzle was pointed directly at Hop Ah Long's heart.

"Back!" said the same voice that he recognized as belonging to Lucy Baxter, the innocent victim. "If you come one step nearer I'll kill you, you yellow-faced toad!"

The Chinaman was furious.

He shouted out a lot of Chinese gibberish to the men in the hall, for he, too, had heard them.

The next instant the door was burst open, and a throng of Celestials crowded into the room.

There were nearly a score of them in all, and they were gesticulating and talking, chattering like so many apes.

But the sight which met their gaze was not at all what they had expected.

Upon the bed, immovable, unconscious, stupefied, sodden, was stretched the figure of Bess Burdette.

Near the centre of the room, Hop Ah Long, half crouching, his nose half torn away, his face covered with blood, and his right hand brandishing an ugly-looking knife.

He was shrieking with rage, cursing and crying with pain.

In the farther corner, calm, dignified, unruffled, her blue eyes flashing defiance and menace, with a leveled revolver in her hand, stood a beautiful girl, holding them all at bay by the very courage shown by her attitude.

For a full minute they hesitated.

But Hop Ah Long was a man of influence among them.

"Kill her! Down with her? She must not escape! Shoot her!" he cried, in Chinese. "Give me pistol! I will shoot her where she stands!"

They started forward.

"Back!" cried Patsy, still in the voice of the girl Lucy.

Again they paused irresolute.

"Give me a pistol!" cried Hop again.

One of the Mongolians drew a weapon, and tossed it to the infuriated Celestial.

He seized it, and raised the hammer, but ere he could level the weapon a sharp report rang from the corner of the room, and the pistol dropped from Hop Ah Long's grasp to the floor.

A bullet from Patsy's revolver had pierced his hand.

He uttered another yell of rage, and bounded forward toward the intrepid

young assistant, forgetful of all personal danger.

The shot acted as a signal for the throng to make a combined attack.

They realized that although their enemy was a girl, she was no mean foe, and that she must never be allowed to leave that house.

In a body—en masse they bounded toward Patsy.

Escape for him seemed out of the question.

Death seemed absolutely uncertain.

But he was resolved to sell his life dearly and he knew that he could bring two or three of them down before he "went under" himself.

He was about to fire again.

His revolver was aimed, and his finger pressed the trigger when assistance suddenly appeared from a most unexpected quarter.

One of the Chinamen, the foremost of them all, in fact, except Hop Ah Long, leaped suddenly forward.

He seemed to grow in stature for the occasion.

Hop Ah Long, who was just in advance of him, felt himself seized in a giant-like grasp, and lifted from his feet.

The next instant he was whirling through the air like a cannon ball, and before any of the yellow fiends knew what had happened they were mowed down like grain before a scythe by the body of their friend, which was hurled among them like a cyclone.

There were yells, shrieks, cries of dismay, groans, curses and imprecations.

Chinese and pigeon English oaths filled the air.

But high above the sound of the melee

there arose a shrill whistle which was answered from the hall.

The instant when one of the Chinamen came to his rescue Patsy resumed as far as was possible the bearing and manner of a girl.

He took no part in the fight that followed, for as Lucy Baxter it was not expected of him.

And what a fight it was!

That one Chinman seemed to possess the brawn and sinew of a dozen men.

His terrible fists shot out, and Mongolians fell around him like chaff.

He leaped from point to point, striking here, lifting and hurling away there, but never once speaking.

It was he who uttered the shrill whistle which was so promptly answered.

It was followed by a rush of numerous forms.

Big men in blue-coated uniforms blocked the doorway, or crowded through it. Heavy clubs of tough locust wood fell like rain upon Chinese skulls.

In two minutes the new-comers were victors; the Chinamen were prisoners.

Then the one who had begun the daring rescue turned to Patsy.

"You are saved, young lady," he said, "and in the nick of time. With your evidence we can convict every Chinaman here as well as the woman yonder."

It was Nick Carter who spoke the words.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOYERS STREET RIOT.

It was instantly evident to Patsy that Nick Carter did not wish the officers who accompanied him to know that it was not

a girl whom they had rescued. He therefore continued to play his part.

He did not know that the detective had known where he was every moment of the time since they parted.

Nick fully realized the dangers which Patsy would be obliged to encounter, and no sooner had the young assistant left the house than the great expert had himself assumed the role of a Chinaman, and "tagged."

He had seen the encounter with Handsome Harry, the confidence man, and had afterward overheard part of the conversation which took place between Patsy and Bess Burdette.

When the woman finally lured her supposed victim into the den of infamy where the incidents above related occurred, Nick had hurried to a telephone, sent the message which brought assistance at the right time, and then, deftly picking the lock of the opium joint, he had made his way to the vicinity of the room where Patsy had been conducted, and having concealed himself, he had waited for the opportune moment to arrive.

He knew when Bess called Hop Ah Long to come and cook the opium for her.

By listening at the door, he followed each incident as it occurred, for he could overhear all that was said within the room.

Twice he was seen, and inquiring looks were cast upon him by frequenters of the place, but he was a master of the Chinese tongue, and could talk pigeon English with the best of them, so his real character was not suspected.

When the struggle began in the room where Patsy was, the detective knew that

the youth had the best of it, and so he awaited developments.

When the score of Celestials arrived, gesticulating and chattering, the detective mingled with the crowd and was unnoticed.

When the door was burst open, he was one of the first to enter, and the reader knows the rest.

The "joint" was raided, the opium and pipes were confiscated, and many prisoners besides those captured in the room where the fight occurred were taken.

Against those, however, a charge could be made which would send them all to prison for long terms.

Abduction, assault with intent to kill, and others, even more serious charges would be their portion, and "Lucy Baxter" would be on hand to substantiate them.

Having broken up one place, which was the vilest of all in Doyers street, it was the intention of the detective to let matters rest for a time, and then to assail another in the same manner.

But even more serious events were to be met that same night as the sequel will show.

The "joint" having been raided, and the prisoners sent away to the station-houses, Nick accompanied by Patsy—still as Lucy Baxter—and two officers were walking through Doyers street toward the Bowery.

The hour was late, for it was then past one o'clock in the morning.

The street, dark, narrow, dirty and forbidding, was not, however, deserted.

The raid upon the establishment of Hop Ah Long and the wholesale arrests

that had followed had excited Chinatown to an unusual pitch of frenzy.

Groups of villainous-looking Chinamen were gathered here and there at intervals along the way.

Some stood upon the curbstones, others nearly blocked the narrow sidewalk, doorways were filled with them, and they were all chattering like so many magpies.

The very air seemed charged with danger, which at any instant might explode.

It was plainly to be seen that the hatred of the throng was more particularly directed toward Nick and the girl who walked by his side.

The former they believed to be a traitor Chinaman, and they looked upon the latter as the cause of their troubles as well as still coveting her as their natural prey.

Nick knew that the least incident would precipitate a fight.

They hurried along the detective and the pseudo Lucy in advance; the two officers immediately behind them with drawn clubs, ready for instant defense.

The very thing which the detective desired to avoid, happened.

They were passing a doorway over which the sign, "Wing Lee, Laundry," was suspended.

Several fierce-looking Chinamen were clustered there, and one of them, more bold than the others, stepped forward and plucked the supposed Lucy by the sleeve.

One of the policeman behind saw the act, and he resented it at once.

He brought his club down with terrific force upon the Chinaman's wrist, snapping it like a pipe-stem, and bringing forth a howl of pain, which acted upon

his companions like a match touched to powder.

Instantly the street was filled with shouts and cries of menace.

The throng of Mongolians leaped forward from every point, and attacked the officers and the girl, as if with one common impulse.

Seeing the affair, one might have imagined that the stroke of the officer's club was the signal for combat, previously agreed upon.

Stones, sticks, missiles of every description filled the air, and were hurled with all the venom and strength of the excited crowd at the officers and their companions.

At the first onslaught, one of the policemen fell, knocked down by a stone.

The other leaped to Nick's side.

The two men backed up against the wall, and faced the angry throng with drawn revolvers.

On they surged, shouting cursing, yelling like so many fiends.

It was a moment of terror.

The air seemed filled with flying stones which the Chinamen tore from the loose pavement and hurled at them.

Nick was struck upon the shoulder and a huge rock grazed his head.

The policeman's left arm fell helplessly to his side, disabled by a paving stone.

Patsy, by dodging, had thus far escaped.

"There is no help for it fire!" said Nick.

They both fired at the same instant and Patsy's revolver came out and its report followed the others an instant later.

Instead of intimidating the throng, the shots seemed to madden the fiends.

They saw some of their number go down before the bullets of their enemies, and, as with one impulse, they dashed forward, almost in one solid mass.

Shot after shot rang out upon the air, drowned in the frightful uproar of the horde of Chinamen.

They pressed closer and closer to the three beings who were struggling so valiantly against such terrible odds.

The revolvers were soon emptied, and the struggle became a hand-to-hand fight.

Blows fell thick and fast everywhere—upon everybody.

As fast as a Chinaman came within reach of Nick Carter's fist he went down.

But his place was quickly supplied by another, and the fiends trampled ruthlessly upon their fallen friends in their mad frenzy to reach the objects of their hatred.

Suddenly the yellow devils made a determined rush for their foes.

They crowded, like flies, upon every side.

They fought like devils, like maniacs, like wolves.

The brave policeman was thrown to the ground and trampled upon.

A dozen hands seized Patsy and tore him from Nick's side, while a hundred others attacked the detective at the same instant.

Nick saw that Patsy was being borne away, despite his struggles, and he made frantic efforts to go to his assistance.

But there were a hundred Chinamen between him and the brave lad. Two hundred arms opposed him.

What could one man do against such odds?

CHAPTER VII.

NICK TO THE RESCUE.

While Nick Carter was struggling with might and main to go to Patsy's rescue, but totally unable to do so on account of the number of foes that opposed him, he saw the brave lad lifted from his feet by a horde of Chinese fiends.

A blanket was thrown over his head, and he was borne away.

They did not attempt to hurt him, for they still thought the boy was a beautiful girl.

Then, as if by magic, a shout went up from somebody in the background.

The fight ceased as suddenly as it had begun; the Chinamen faded away through doorways, alleyways, and buildings, and in a moment more the street was entirely deserted, save for the two policemen and Nick.

The detective was the only one of the three who was upon his feet.

The officers, bruised, bleeding, and utterly used up, were slowly struggling to their feet; but there was not an enemy in sight.

At that instant, down the street came the sound of measured but hasty tread, and a squad of blue-coats from the nearest police station appeared.

But they were too late.

The fight was over; the Mongolians had fled.

Not a trace of them was to be seen.

They had faded away like so many phantoms, and nobody could say where they had gone.

To trace a Chinaman amid his favorite haunts is like tracking a mouse in an old barn; you may find mice, but that particular mouse will have disappeared utterly.

and entirely, and you have no means of identifying him.

But Patsy—or rather Lucy Baxter—was also gone.

The lad, arrayed in his disguise as a young and beautiful girl, was spirited away as absolutely as though dissolved into air.

Nick knew that as soon as the Chinamen discovered the trick that had been played upon them, Patsy's life would not be worth a moment's purchase.

If left in the power of the Mongolian fiends any length of time, Patsy was doomed.

"There is no time to waste," muttered the detective. "I must get to work at once."

The squad of policemen joined him, and the two who were injured were cared for by their friends.

"Where are the others?" asked the sergeant in command, addressing Nick.

"What others?"

"The Chinamen."

"Gone."

"Didn't you kill any of them?"

"Who can say?"

"Well, I don't see their carcasses lying around."

"No; and you never will."

"Why?"

"Their friends have carted them away."

"Oh!"

"A Chinaman will fight harder to rescue the corpse of a countryman from the Christians than he will to save his own life."

"Is that so?"

"Yes if we killed any——"

"And we did, too, cuss 'em!" growled

one of the wounded officers.

"If we killed any of them," repeated Nick, "their friends have carried the bodies away."

"Well, what are you going to do next?" demanded the sergeant.

"Find the girl and rescue her," replied Nick.

"How many men do you want?"

"None."

"Eh?"

"None."

"Do you mean to say you are going it alone?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's your business, not mine only——"

"Only what?"

"I should want a few men with me."

"You might as well remain in the station-house as search here with two or three men with you."

"Why?"

"You would never find the girl."

"I'd raid every house in the street."

"Still you would not find her."

"I'll bet she's in one of them at this moment."

"So will I."

"Well, then——"

"While you were searching the house where she is now, the Chinamen would smuggle her into the next one. When you had finished that one, they would take her back, and you could search the others at your leisure."

"Humph!" grunted the sergeant. "I've only got one thing more to say."

"What is that?"

"If you stay here alone, it will be the last we'll ever see or hear of you."

"Think so?"

"I'll bet on it."

"You are mistaken just the same."

"Why, I'll bet a dozen of those yellow fiends are watching us this moment."

"So will I."

"Then won't they know that we leave you behind?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm going with you——"

"Oh! Changed your mind, eh?"

"~~Yes~~—as far as the corner."

"Oh!"

"Are you ready, sergeant?"

"Yes."

"Let us move, then. Take hold of me and lead me away as though I were a prisoner. Thanks."

They started away.

The corner was soon reached, and there Nick paused.

"Surround me just a minute," he said, and the men obeyed.

"Now watch."

He made a few rapid changes in the disguise he wore.

When he had finished he was still a Chinaman, but he did not resemble the one who had been engaged in the fight any more than he did the sergeant before him.

"Lofficel sabe that?" he said, with a smile.

"Wonderful."

"Melican man think he tam smartee," continued Nick, enjoying the astonishment of the officers; "Melican man big nincumpoopee, allee samee like jackass, sabe that?"

Then, with a laugh, he turned away and disappeared in the shadows of Doyers street.

"He's a hummer!" muttered the sergeant.

"You bet!" was the unanimous response of his men.

Then they continued on their way to the station-house, wondering not a little if any of them would ever see Nick Carter alive again.

But Nick had been through many a scrape, worse than any to be feared in Doyers street, and the thought of danger did not once occur to him in the sense of hesitation over the affair.

He relied, upon several positive points to aid him.

His disguise was perfect, and he had not the slightest fear that the shrewdest Mongolian in the street would recognize in him the same Celestial who had figured in the raid upon the opium joint of Hap Ah Long.

Again, he was perfect master of the Chinese language. He had acquired it long ago from a Chinaman whom he had rescued from peril and death.

Still again, the detective had been initiated into the two great secret societies of China, the Suey Sing Tong and the Suey Ong Tong.

He knew, that possessing this knowledge, he could pass "muster" before any group of Celestials that could congregate in Doyers, Pell or Mott streets; and he believed that before morning, he could penetrate every "joint" in Chinatown, search them, and go away without attracting suspicion to himself.

We shall see how well he succeeded.

Upon entering Doyers street, he walked directly toward the house of Hop Ah Long, and rang the bell at the door.

He waited some time, but, of course, received no answer.

Presently a Chinaman glided into view from the adjoining house, and addressed him in his own language.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Hop Ah Long."

"Hop Ah Long has been arrested; his place is destroyed; his goods confiscated; the house is empty."

Nick pretended to be greatly astounded.

He at once began to chatter to the informant in Chinese, asking him what had happened, and perceiving by a badge that the Mongolian wore that he was a Suey Ong Tong man, the detective made a rapid sign of that order, in order to convince his new-found companion that his confidences would not be misplaced.

Their conversation was in perfect Chinese, so we will translate it just as it was uttered without the pigeon English that would have been used, had they conversed in the English language.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIME FOR THE EXECUTION.

"Tell me about it," said Nick.

"First tell me who you are," was the guarded reply.

"Like you, I am a Suey Ong."

"Yes; but your name, where you came from, why you are here, and all that."

Nick rapidly made up a story in which he represented himself as a traveling Chinese merchant—in other words, an opium smuggler—from San Francisco.

He gave his name as Wah Ming, and said that he belonged to the Golden Gate branch of the Suey Ong Tong.

"I am Sing Lung," replied the other.

"Now, why are you here?"

"To see Hop Ah Long."

"You are a stranger?"

"Yes."

"You have never been here before?"

"No. I come to get trade; see!"

As he spoke, he quickly produced a little package which he slowly undid.

Sing Lung's eyes began to glisten.

He knew what was coming as well as the detective knew that he was taking the surest way of winning the confidence of the reticent Mongolian.

Presently the detective produced several small particles of opium.

Selecting two, he handed them to Sing Lung.

"They are yours," he said.

"Mine?"

"Yes."

"Do you give them to me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"In order that you will introduce me as your friend, and assist me in selling my stock."

The opium that the detective gave to Sing Lung was of the very finest quality—a fact which the fellow was quick to grasp.

"I will help you," he said.

"Good! You shall have a large supply for yourself when my sales are made."

"Agreed. Come with me."

"Wait."

"Why?"

"First tell me about my friend, Hop Ah Long."

"He is in prison."

"Yes, you said that. Since when?"

"An hour ago."

"Ah! Why?"

"For sellin' opium."

"Is that all?"

"And abducting a young girl."

"Oh!"

"The girl was a terror."

"Homely, eh?"

"No, beautiful. But she fought."

"Bah!"

"Yes; with a pistol."

"What!"

"It is true. She had friends near by who came to her aid.

"Ah!"

"Yes; and among them was a renegade Chinaman."

"You should have killed him."

"He escaped."

"I wish I had been here."

"I wish you had."

"And the girl; what became of her?"

"We rescued her."

"Ah!"

"She is now a prisoner."

"Good!"

"Where she cannot escape."

"Where is she?"

"I have said—where she cannot escape."

"True."

"She will be punished."

"Yes?"

"At half-past three—that is in an hour or so."

"With what?"

"Death."

"Bah! I thought you said she was beautiful."

"She is."

"Then sell her."

"Sell her to whom?"

"To me, if she pleases me."

Sing Lung shook his head.

"Sentence has been passed," he said.

"Why?"

"It is believed that she is a former opium-smoker from another city who allowed herself to be led to the house of

Hop Ah Long for the purpose of betraying him."

"Ah!"

"Therefore she must die."

"Bah!" said Nick. "She should first be offered for sale, and, if anybody will pay enough, she should be sold."

"Nobody would buy."

"Perhaps I would."

"You would be a fool."

"Why?"

"She would lead you into trouble," said Sing Lung.

Then he leaned forward and added in a half whisper:

"She has the evil eye."

Nick raised his hands in pretended horror.

"And yet, she is beautiful, you say," he sighed.

"Yes."

"Too bad."

"Ah! You want a wife, Wah Ming?"

"I do."

"I will get you one."

"When?"

"Now."

"Where?"

"At Sam Ling's."

"Is she young and beautiful?"

"She is both. She is there now. She was brought in just before the riot in the street. I can save her for you, if you will pay a good price, and if you will give me more opium."

"I will do both."

"Then she is yours."

"Good! Let us go; but first, a condition, Sing Lung."

"What is it?"

"You must show me the girl who is to be put to death."

"You may be present at the execution."

"Can't I see her before?"

"No."

"Very good. Now show me the wife you propose to sell to me."

"Come."

"I can save an innocent creature from harm, at all events," was the detective's thought as he followed his guide across the street.

They entered the place kept by Sam Ling, and were at once admitted to the principal room, where men and women, old and young, in every stage of stupefaction were stretched upon the filthy bunks, lost to this world and to the next.

The room was stifling, and the air was frightful.

Sam Ling, the proprietor, was seated before a little oil-stove, busily engaged in cooking the drug and preparing it for consumption in the pipe.

Sing Lung said a few words to him in Chinese, which served as an introduction for the supposed Wah Ming.

Sam Ling nodded, and placidly continued his occupation for several moments.

Presently he rose, and uttering one word, "come," led the way from the reeking room into the hall.

They mounted two flights of stairs, and at last paused before a door which the Chinaman unlocked with a huge key.

"Go in," he said.

They entered.

A single lamp, with a very smoky chimney, was burning in the room, and at first the detective could see nothing.

Then, as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he perceived the form of a girl not over fourteen years of age, lying fully dressed, upon the floor in the centre of the room.

Her cheeks were still wet with the tears she had shed, and she had doubtless sobbed herself to sleep—a sleep in which she forgot her terror and helplessness, for there was a smile upon her lips as they gazed at her.

A glance told Nick that he was in time.

He turned, and with a peremptory

wave of his hand, forced both Sam Ling and Sing Lung again into the hall.

He followed them out instantly, and closed the door behind him.

"How much?" he demanded, laconically, in Chinese.

"Five hundred dollars."

"Too much."

"No less, Wah Ming."

"Keep her, then," and he pretended to turn away.

"How much will you give?"

"She is to be my property?"

"Yes."

"I may take her away—do with her as I like?"

"Yes."

"Two hundred."

"Add fifty more."

"Very well; two hundred and fifty. Here is your money; give me the key."

The money and the key exchanged hands; the bargain was concluded.

Nick followed the human fiends down stairs. His anger was so great that he could hardly trust himself to speak.

It was his intention to seize the first opportunity to go again to the room where he had seen the sleeping girl and to relieve her anxiety and assure her that she should be safe, but he could find no chance to do so. Twenty minutes later Sing Lung approached him after having conversed for several moments with Sam Ling.

"Come," he said.

"Where?"

"It is time for the execution of the girl Lucy; come."

CHAPTER IX.

IN AWFUL FLIGHT.

The detective and his companion, Sing Lung, left the opium "joint" together, Nick being in possession of the key to the room where the young girl was imprisoned, whom he had just purchased.

The bargain had been, according to

Chinese ideas, a fair one, and the detective did not suspect that treachery would be attempted.

It was manifestly impossible for him to be in two places at once, no matter how important the seeming necessity might be, and just now he felt that his duty called him to the rescue of Patsy, having done all that could be done, for the time being, for the unknown girl.

The interiors of Chinese opium dens are all, as the faces of their proprietors, very much alike, and the one to which Sing Lung led the stranger, Wah Ming, was not an exception to the rule, so far as the first appearance went.

There was the close, ill-smelling room with its complement of debauchees, stretched upon bunks, or even upon the floor when all the bunks were taken; the opium-laden air, the glowing lamps at which the drug was "cooked," and the oppressive heat.

But in one respect this house was different from the others, for it was conducted by one of the most influential Chinamen in New York, as well as one of the richest.

Beneath his roof he had accommodations for all classes of customers; there were rooms for gambling, and upon the top floor the partitions had been removed, thus creating a spacious hall where a local secret society met frequently.

It was to this hall that Sing Lung led the way; for it was here that the execution was to take place.

The society was a natural outgrowth of the fiendish propensities of the Mongolian scavenger.

It was organized for the promulgation of crime, for the very purpose to which it was now being put—that is, the seizure of victims and their punishment when, in the belief of the inhuman captors, the poor creatures deserved it.

The room was half filled when Nick and his guide entered.

Unlike other halls, there were no benches or chairs to be seen.

The room was absolutely bare of furniture, the only article in view being an ordinary wash-tub, which was in the middle of the farther end of the hall.

Chinamen were constantly arriving.

Some of them squatted upon the floor, and waited silently and patiently for the victim to be brought in.

Others gathered in groups, and chattered like sparrows before a rain.

Each group, whether sitting or standing, was constantly augmented by newcomers, many of them showing evidences of the recent riot in the street, where for a few moments, the fighting had been so fierce.

The scene reminded Nick of his first entrance into the society headquarters of the Suey Sing, in San Francisco, and he wondered if his experiences now would be as thrilling as then.

In twenty minutes the hall was crowded by at least two hundred Chinamen, and still there was no sign of Patsy.

Presently a gong sounded, and the chattering became hushed in an instant.

Silence reigned; and at the same moment a small door at the upper end of the room opened.

Three stalwart Chinamen entered, one walking in advance, and the others bearing a litter upon which was stretched the form of the supposed Lucy Baxter, for Nick instantly discovered that Patsy's disguise had not been disarranged.

The detective breathed a sigh of relief.

Thus far the boy was unhurt, he knew, except for the few blows that he may have received during the fight in the street.

How to save him was another question.

There were but two entrances to the hall.

One was behind him—the door by which the throng had gained admittance—the other was the narrow place through

which the doomed captive had been brought.

Nick Carter was never without resource.

When he first set out upon the adventure in Chinatown, he prepared for every emergency that might arise.

Nobody knew the Chinese character better than he.

The terrors, the superstitions, the fanaticisms which sway them were familiar to him, and in the capacious pockets of his costume was concealed many an article which he now believed he would find useful.

Sing Lung, anxious to please his new-found friend, from whom he expected to receive more of that excellent quality of opium, had pushed to the very front of the crowd, and Nick stood beside him.

The litter upon which Patsy was stretched was deposited upon the floor, and then the foremost Chinaman, who seemed to be a leader among them, began a long speech in Chinese.

He told the story of that night most graphically.

He recited in detail all that had occurred at the house of Hop Ah Long, and he ended by proclaiming the girl Lucy to be a spy, one who had deliberately come among them for the purposes of a raid, for which she had forfeited her life and her right to Celestial bliss.

When he finished, a shout went up from the throng.

"The penalty! the penalty!" the cried.

Then the leader of those human fiends pronounced a sentence of death.

Suddenly everybody there was startled by a voice from the crowd, which cried in Chinese.

"Show us the girl!"

It was Nick Carter's voice that spoke, and Patsy, from whose heart all hope had fled, experienced a thrill of joy.

The boy could not understand a word that was being said around him.

He did not realize to its full extent the horror of his position, but he knew that unless he were rescued, death in some violent form would be his portion.

If there is anything in which Chinese ingenuity excels, it is in the art of torture, and Patsy knew that he would not be spared.

Rather would he be made to suffer all the tortures that his captors could invent.

Nick, in shouting out as he did, had two purposes.

One was to inform Patsy of his presence, and the other was to inflame in the hearts of the audience the desire to once more view the beautiful face of the captive.

They took up the shout.

"Ay, show us the girl!" they cried.

The chief of the awful ceremony frowned.

"Who spoke first?" he cried.

"I."

Nick Carter stepped forward and stood alone in front of the crowd, facing the angry chief.

Instantly, they all recognized the fact that he was a stranger.

"Who are you?" demanded the spokesman.

"Wah Ming."

"Where do you live?"

"In San Francisco."

"Your business?"

Nick smiled placidly.

"Traveling merchant," he replied.

At the same instant he deftly produced a little package of opium from his pocket, and tossed it to his interlocutor.

"Why are you here?" demanded the spokesman again, though with a shade less severity in his tone.

"To buy the girl, if you will sell her."

A howl went up from the crowd.

"No—no—no—no!" they cried.

"You hear?"

"Yes."

"Step back, then."

Nick stood his ground.

"You have all seen her," he said, "I have not. I have more opium for my friends. May I look at her?"

"Yes."

There was a murmur of disapproval from the body of the hall, but Nick paid no attention to that.

Two strides took him to Patsy's side.

He knew that every eye was upon him, and at the least sign of treachery on his part, he would be attacked on every side.

But he had a purpose in view in wishing to reach the boy's side, and he believed now that he saw a possible chance of rescuing him.

It was as ingenious as it was daring, and deserved success.

CHAPTER X.

PHARAOH'S SERPENTS.

The readers of the New Nick Carter Library are familiar with the fact that the great detective is an expert in the performance of tricks.

So are the Chinese, as a rule, and yet no people are so prone to attribute anything which they cannot understand to supernatural power as they.

Every boy who reads has seen or heard of the little pill from which, when a match is touched to it, a worm will crawl, and after squirming and writhing for a time subside.

It is called Pharaoh's snake.

Nick had in his pocket two of those strange pills, but they were of immense size, being fully as large as black walnuts.

From them snakes nearly as large as a man's wrist would writhe when brought into contact with fire, and the detective knew from what he had heard that the first performance of the ceremony would be the branding of the victim with a hot iron.

The privilege of performing this rite was to be accorded to the person who

would pay the most money for it, and Nick knew that he could outbid all others, for he always went well supplied with money.

When he reached Patsy's side he bent forward for an instant, and unseen by the hundreds of eyes that were watching him dropped the two mysterious pills one on either side of the boy's face.

"Courage and patience," he whispered; "I will save you."

Then he straightened and cried, in pigeon English:

"Melican gallee beautiful. Wah Ming buy her; no matter what costee."

"No—no—no—no!" yelled the crowd.

"Then Wah Ming buy the brand," he added, stolidly, for curiously enough the privilege of applying the hot iron to the captive's face was a great one, and secured to the fiend who did it—if his victim were a traitor—a sure place in the celestial regions.

A howl went up when he made the statement that he would buy the brand.

But it subsided when the strange auction began.

The bidding waxed hot and furious.

It began at one dollar, and climbed to fifty in a moment.

Nick's bid was always at the top.

Finally the sum reached eighty-five dollars.

Then Nick stepped forward, and pulling a roll of money from his pocket, cried:

"One hundred and fifty."

There was silence.

The master of ceremonies waited a long time, but no one raised the sum to a higher figure.

Finally he turned, and pointing toward a little charcoal furnace in which an iron had been heating for some time, said:

"You have bought the brand."

Nick stepped forward, and seized the iron, now heated to a white heat.

Every Chinaman in the room now rose

to his feet, and stretched his neck in order to witness the operation of branding.

Nick approached Patsy, holding the heated iron in his right hand.

In the palm of his left hand was at the same time concealed a small penknife, and the blade, as sharp as a razor, was open and read for use.

The detective had shouted out his offers in pigeon English so that Patsy might get some idea of what was about to happen.

The boy, however, had perfect confidence in his master, and he now felt certain that Nick would find some way to rescue him.

He opened his eyes when Nick drew near, and he saw the heated iron as it sparkled in the seeming Chinaman's hand.

"Courage!" whispered the detective. "Whatever happens don't move till I say so."

Then he stretched forth his hand.

The end of the hot iron touched one of the mysterious pills, ignited it, and was quickly transferred to the other.

He waited an instant, and then, as the strange chemical began to work, he uttered a cry of terror, and lunged forward, seeming to thrust the red-hot iron into the captive's eyes.

Then he leaped back, uttering yell after yell of well assumed terror.

Two huge serpents were crawling, writhing, wriggling, as though from beneath the captive's head.

They thrust themselves upward and forward.

They turned and twisted, coiled and uncoiled, wound themselves together, and again wound with all the appearance of life.

They covered the captive from head to foot; they glided to the floor, over and about the litter with all the seeming grace of genuine serpents.

The room became filled with a pungent odor.

Chattering, shouting, cries of astonishment and terror turned the place into a bedlam.

Nick seemed to be the most terrified of all.

He leaped from point to point, shouting, crying out, cursing in Chinese, and otherwise doing everything in his power to add to the confusion.

Many of the spectators bolted for the door.

The three who had acted as leaders leaped away from the vicinity of the litter upon which their captive was stretched, and mingled with the crowd, all the while getting nearer and nearer to the front door.

Suddenly a cry of horror went up from the throng. The man who had applied the brand and thus called down the curse upon them—the stranger, Wah Ming, was seen to pitch forward and to fall into the very midst of the writhing coils.

With another yell of terror he instantly sprang to his feet.

The crowd saw him draw his pistols and begin a fusillade of bullets at the supposed reptiles.

But they only seemed to writhe the more.

Then, could it be believed, the captive herself leaped from the litter and started toward them.

Coils of the strange reptiles clung about her as she moved, and the crowd, with a simultaneous yell of horror and dismay, turned and pressed toward the door.

A panic once started is a grim destroyer in a crowded room.

There was but one means of egress for the frightened mob, and that was through a narrow door.

There were two hundred Chinamen in the room, and each one wanted to be the first to leave it.

They swore, they shouted, they cursed, they cried with terror, they fought, they trampled one another beneath their feet, they climbed over the heads and shoulders of those in advance of them.

The two hundred Mongolians became a mass of writhing humanity, tearing at each other's throats, fighting, nay, killing their best friends in order to pass beyond the reach of those fiery reptiles which had created the panic.

Had they looked back they would have seen that the snakes had ceased to be; that there was nothing left of them but a feathery substance that had settled like dust upon the floor.

Had they looked back they would not have seen the girl captive nor the man who had applied the brand.

It is possible that they might have believed they had been swallowed by the serpents, however.

But they did not look back. They had but one thought, one idea.

To escape from the room was the only desire in their hearts, and they struggled on, fighting, plunging, cursing, shouting like the mad fiends they were.

To them the room was bewitched—possessed of the devil. The captive was a fiend, and Wah Ming an unfortunate victim of the pythons.

But the captive and the rescuer were laughing in their sleeves.

As soon as the panic commenced and the backs of the frantic men who composed the mob were turned toward him Nick Carter seized Patsy by the arm, and the next instant they disappeared through the narrow door at the rear of the room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE.

How many Chinamen were killed, maimed, bruised, or crippled in that terrible scramble to escape from the room where the captive "Lucy" was to have

been executed will never be known. Nick did not care. The first thing was to escape from the house, and the only way in which it could be done was to utilize that moment of excitement when every man was looking out for self alone.

To take Patsy into the presence of a Doyers street Chinaman while arrayed in the costume of "Lucy Baxter" the detective knew would be fatal.

When he passed through the door he found himself in a hallway which seemed to be connected with the adjoining house.

Still grasping Patsy by the arm, he hurried him along, and presently they reached an open door. One glance into the room revealed the common sight of such places—a man, stretched upon a couch, stupefied by opium, floating in space above the bottomless pit.

The apartment was one of the most sumptuous in that house, and the occupant was, judging from his attire, a man of means.

"Here's your chance, Patsy," cried Nick.

"Where?"

"Here; in this room."

"I don't see it."

"The man."

"What of him?"

"Come in, shut the door, and I will tell you."

Patsy obeyed.

"Look at him," said Nick.

"Well?"

"How big is he?"

"About my size."

"Exactly; therefore his clothes will fit you."

"Oh! But how about this confounded wig?"

"I'll have it off in a jiffy, Pat."

"But I say——" began Patsy, when the wig was removed, and his bald pate revealed.

"Well, what?"

"Taking that fellow's clothes is mighty like stealing."

"It can't be helped. Your life isn't worth a dime in that girl's rig."

"That's so."

"All you need are his outer garments. Here is a black wig to cover that shaved head of yours, and you can clap on this false mustache; it is something like this fellow's."

"What'll he do when he wakes up and finds his clothes gone?"

"He'll send for the proprietor, and raise a row."

"Yes, but——"

"Never mind what he does. It serves him right for coming to such a place. Now, get to work."

"I'm ready."

"Pay attention to what I say now."

"Correct."

"I'm going to leave you here."

"Oh!"

"You've got to find your way out alone."

"I can do it."

"I hope so. You must, anyhow."

"I will."

"When you get out skip for the station house."

"Yes."

"Tell the sergeant who you are, and bring a squad of men to Sam Ling's place as quick as you know how."

"You bet."

"I've got enough evidence to tear that place out root and branch, just as we did Hop Ah Long's, for I found one of his fresh victims there, and bought her in time to save her, thank God!"

"Good!"

"This place will follow, and the proprietor and a few of those fiends who were up stairs will go where they sing twice for murderous assault."

"Sure."

"This will be a night in the history of Doyers street long to be remembered."

"You bet it will!"

"Well, I'm going, Patsy. Get to the station house as soon as you can, and bring the men to Sam Ling's place first."

"Yes, sir."

"Be careful when you go out."

"I will."

"Play the stupefied opium fiend, and you will be all right."

Nick passed from the room, leaving Patsy to complete the change in his appearance and to carry out the orders he had received.

The detective's first move when he was again in the hall was to disarrange his clothing and to rub a little red paint upon his face and hands to give the appearance of having been wounded.

Then instead of searching for the stairs to descend, he hurried back to the room where the panic had been produced by his wit and shrewdness.

He glanced through the narrow door. Not a person was in sight.

The lights were still burning, but not a human being was to be seen.

Those who had been wounded and trampled upon had either crawled away or had been rescued by their friends at the last moment.

The detective entered, and looked about him with a smile.

At the same moment he heard the sound of footsteps cautiously approaching from beyond the opposite door.

Instantly he threw himself at full length upon the floor, and lying still, waited.

Presently a head and yellow face appeared at the doorway, and then another.

A moment passed, and two Chinamen cautiously entered.

They stole forward as though half fearful to advance, when suddenly one of them espied Nick.

"There!" he cried, excitedly, in Chinese. "There is the man Wah Ming."

"Is he dead?" asked the other.

"Let us see."

They stole forward cautiously.

Nick moved a little, and they paused.

Nick groaned, and they started back.

Nick raised himself to a sitting posture, and they beat a hasty retreat toward the door.

"No run from Wah Ming!" cried Nick, in pigeon English. "Wah Ming better."

They retraced their steps.

"Muchee hurtee?" asked one, naturally assuming the same language.

"No; belly lilly. Snakee chaw Wah Ming finger; snakee dead; sabe?"

An affirmative grunt was the response, and Nick rose painfully to his feet.

"Where gallee?" he demanded.

"Gone."

"Allee gone?"

"Ye' Flew away allee same like lightning!"

"Ki'l"

"Gallee witch; she debil; snakee clawl outee her ears; swallow two Chinamen; snakee awful; sabe?"

"Ye'."

Then, with all the embellishments he could think of, Nick related his horrible struggle with the reptiles. He told the eager listeners that they were in the act of devouring him when he lost consciousness, and consequently he had no idea what agency had saved him from an awful death.

He was the hero of the hour.

The two men led him down stairs, and there, in the reeking smoking room, he related over again the imaginary horrors through which he had passed.

As soon as he could he left his auditors and repaired to the house of Sam Ling,

for he wished to be there when the officers arrived.

His fame, for some reason, had not preceded him.

Sam Ling and the people in his house had heard of the terrible catastrophe that had occurred at the execution of the girl Lucy, but they had not heard of the escape of Wah Ming.

Nick paused a moment.

He told in part the same story that he had related before.

Then drawing the huge key from his pocket he started for the stairs.

"Where Wah Ming goin'?" demanded Sam Ling.

"Find gallee."

"Wha' gallee?"

"Gallee Wah Ming bought; pay Sam Ling two hundred an' fifty dol', allee same cash; sabe?"

"Gallee gone."

"Gone!"

"Ye'."

"Gone where?"

"Wif Sing Lung. Sing Lung comee to Sam Ling. Sing Lung say Wah Ming dead; Sing Lung claimee gal. Sing Lung takee gal; Sam Ling washee han's, so; sabe?"

There was nobody else near them.

Nick and the Chinaman were alone near the foot of the stairs.

Then the detective was told that the child he meant to save had been taken away by Sing Lung he was so enraged that he leaped forward and struck out with his right fist, using all his strength.

Sam Ling caught the blow squarely between the eyes, and he went down like a log.

Nick knew that the noise of the fall

would attract attention, and he leaped forward again, seized the now unconscious form of Sam Ling in his arms, and with him bounded up the stairs.

Ere he paused he stood in front of the very door to which he held a key and beyond which the girl he had purchased had been a prisoner.

Just as he reached it a shrill scream from the interior of the room rang out wildly.

Like a flash the truth dawned upon the detective.

Sam Ling had lied. The girl was there in that room, and Sing Lung was with her.

He did not wait to use his key; that would have taken too long.

He raised one foot and sent it crashing with all his force against the door.

It yielded.

One more ferocious kick, and it fell into the room.

Nick dropped his burden, and leaping past the wrecked door uttered a shout of joy, for he saw that he had arrived in time.

The child, shrinking with terror in a far corner of the room, had succeeded in placing a small table between her and the ruffian who had been pursuing her.

That ruffian was Sing Lung, and as the door crashed in he turned to face the unexpected foe.

But he might as well have faced a cyclone.

Nick was upon him with a rush like a whirlwind.

He seized the Chinaman in his mighty arms, and hurled him with all his force

across the room, as one might throw the body of a dead cat.

The girl screamed with terror.

She saw only an added danger in the advent of a second Chinaman.

"Do not fear," exclaimed Nick, in English. "I am not a Chinaman; I am here to save you."

She hardly understood, and yet somehow she was quieted and reassured by the voice that spoke to her.

In another moment Nick had the two unconscious Mongolians firmly shackled, hand and foot.

Then as he turned to reassure the child again there came a noise of pounding from below.

Presently it was followed by the crash of a falling door, and in a very few moments the den swarmed with officers of the law.

The place was raided as Hop Ah Long's had been, the prisoners and the effects found there were taken away, and then, led by Nick and Patsy, they repaired to the place where the latter so narrowly escaped excruciating torture.

The alarm had spread, however, and many of the inmates of the house had fled.

The proprietor was found hiding beneath some boxes and barrels just under the roof, and he is now in Sing Sing.

The man whose clothing Patsy had been obliged to borrow was still drowned in his opium debauch, but he was taken away to wake in a station house.

The young girl whom Nick rescued at so timely a moment belonged to an excellent family up town, and she was speedily returned to her parents, sadder and wiser, and forever warned against enter-

ing into conversation with unknown women on the streets of New York.

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And the detective had replied:

"Evidence you shall have, sir."

We have seen how it was procured, and the name Nick Carter brings terror to the hearts of the Doyers street criminals.

[THE END.]

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